



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

News Release

Date: September 9, 2014

Contact: Jessica Kershaw, Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov
Christina Meister (FWS), 703-358-2284

Secretary Jewell, Director Ashe Announce \$35 Million in Grants to Boost State Endangered Species Conservation Efforts

Funding to 20 states will help collaborative efforts to conserve America's most imperiled species

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe today announced nearly \$35 million in grants to 20 states to enable collaborative efforts to conserve many of America's imperiled species, ranging from the red cockaded woodpecker in the Southeast to a variety of bat species in the Midwest to a colorful flower in the Rocky Mountains. A list of the projects by state is available [here](#).

“Partnerships are critical to ensuring future generations will be able to see threatened and endangered species in the wild rather than simply in a history book,” Jewell said. “These grants will enable states to work in voluntary partnership with private landowners and a wide variety of other stakeholders to preserve vital habitat and move these species down the road to recovery.”

Issued through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act), the competitive grants allow states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other government agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat that benefits threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants.

“Private landowners and natural resource managers are the linchpin for the conservation of many of our most threatened species,” Ashe said. “By fostering partnerships between federal, state and local governments, private organizations, and individuals, we can pool our resources to develop creative solutions that will drive critical conservation and recovery efforts. These grants are one of many tools available under the Endangered Species Act and we look forward to providing continued guidance and support for these programs.”

The grant funding is provided through programs established to help advance creative partnerships for the recovery of imperiled species. This year, the fund will allocate approximately \$7.4 million in grants through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program; nearly \$18 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and \$9.5 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program.

“We can wait for fish and wildlife species to decline to the point where we can’t do anything but react with expensive, last-ditch efforts, or we can take proactive steps to conserve wildlife and their habitats before it is too late,” said Dan Forster, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Director of the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division. “These grants will enable state fish and wildlife agencies to carry out important on-the-ground conservation actions with our partners to advance the stewardship of our nation’s fish and wildlife resources.”

A complete list of the 2014 grant awards under these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615) is available online at: www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/index.html

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are agreements between a landowner and the Service that allow a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property, even if they may impact listed species. In return, the landowner agrees to conservation measures designed to avoid, minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions. HCPs may also be developed by a county or state to cover certain activities of all landowners within their jurisdiction and may address multiple species.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisitions that complement the conservation objectives of approved HCPs.

For example, the state of North Carolina will receive nearly \$1.1 million to support the acquisition of up to 1,761 acres of longleaf pine habitat in the Sandhills region of the state used by red-cockaded woodpeckers. Acquisition, restoration, and protection of this property will promote connectivity among woodpecker groups to expand managed areas in and around the Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall woodpecker populations, and throughout the North Carolina Sandhills.

The HCP Planning Assistance Grants Program provides grants to states and territories to support the development of HCPs through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach and similar planning activities.

For example, The Departments of Natural Resources in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin will use a \$750,000 grant to develop an HCP for several species of cave-dwelling bats including the endangered Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and proposed little brown bat and tri-colored bats. The plan will focus on forest management on state, county and private lands and will result in a better understanding of species distribution and summer habitat use by cave-dwelling bats, species currently severely threatened by white-nose syndrome.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

One of this year’s grants will provide \$494,137 to enable the state of Colorado to acquire up to 83 acres in Archuleta County to protect the endangered Pagosa skyrocket from planned development. This acquisition is key to the survival and recovery of this locally-endemic plant

species because it will protect up to 90 percent of the largest and most important remaining populations of the species, as well as designated critical habitat.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife, and plants. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit www.fws.gov/endangered.

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